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ABSTRACT

To make teacher evaluation more effective and meaningful, supervisors must ensure that two-way communication takes place in all phases of the evaluation process, including planning and the collection and use of information. The easiest way to evaluate teachers is to look only at outcomes--the method recommended in management-by-objectives (MBO) procedures. However, to guarantee good interpersonal interaction the MBO evaluation method should use a team of evaluators. Supervisor interaction with teachers must also overcome several barriers. First, supervisors' feedback and their offers of assistance must not threaten teachers' self-esteem and must promote teacher-supervisor trust. Feedback focused on the teaching job and oriented to the future is most effective. To be able to communicate in the most useful way, supervisors should also acquire skills in different verbal styles. Another barrier supervisors must overcome is verbal and nonverbal blocking behavior (by teachers, supervisors, or both), which can restrict teacher-supervisor interaction. Supervisor communication with teachers during evaluation is further improved when the supervisor knows his or her own behavior, needs, and skills as well as those of the teachers and students. (RW)

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Research Paper

on

THE ADMINISTRATOR-TEACHER INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION DURING THE EVALUATION PROCESS

EDADM 552
Seminar in School Personnel Administration

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University of Washington

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One of the most difficult interpersonal relationships that an administrator engages in is that of evaluating the professional certificated staff within a school building. Judging the competence and effectiveness of a teacher is not only demanded from a society that expects accountability; but, it is an activity which is mandated by law. According to Bolton (1973), "evaluation is a value judgement made late in a dynamic process; unless adequate description, analysis, and interpretation precede it, errors and poor results will occur. Some propose that a major purpose of evaluation be to force communication between the employee and the supervisor, so that the employee can always know where he stands with the organization. Others indicate that quality of communication is important and that the purposes of communication should go well beyond simply letting the employee know where he stands." (p. 97) This latter stance is the subject of this research paper and its purpose will be to analyze the supervisor-subordinate interpersonal relationship during the evaluation process. This paper will propose various ways of facilitating the communication to make the evaluation process more effective and meaningful to both the administrator and the teacher.

A three-phase, cyclical process model for evaluation of personnel (Appendix 1) includes communication within Phase III: Using Information. The model would be better illustrated if it was shown that two-way communication existed throughout the entire process. Implementing this highly useable system of supervision and evaluation is one matter; but communicating the elements of the system and employing dynamic interactive processes would result in final objectives being more effectively coordinated. Bolton (1973, p. 97) found that "continuous interaction between teacher and principal

assists both to analyze information," and also for this interaction to be most effective the communication must be two-way, requiring that each person listen to the other.

Knudson, Woodworth and Bell (1979, p. 19) believe that an administrator should be aware of the trade-offs and advantages/disadvantages associated with the use of a two-way system of communication. They conclude that a two-way system of communication, (a) is more accurate in the information exchanged (b) promotes a higher level of confidence among the people involved, (c) induces lower frustration and higher morale in the organization, and (d) takes appreciably longer time and practice. Their findings also mention that in a two-way system of communication, the communicator is apt to make more mistakes; but, these mistakes may be clarified by the interactive process. These mistakes do make the communicator susceptible to psychological attack and may reflect upon the abilities of the administrator to communicate and, more broadly, upon that person's managerial ability.

Newton (1980) believes that the educational technology movement with a variety of management models including PPBS (Program planning-budgeting-systems), mastery learning and management by objectives (MBO) can provide a blueprint of teacher expectancies and a precise description of how evaluation will occur. All of these approaches emphasize accomplishments (results, outcomes, consequences) rather than activities (process). Newton argues that employing a system of evaluation which focuses on outcomes would make criteria easily understood and "it eliminates or reduces dramatically by diverting attention from personalities and concentrating on objective, visible objectives." (p. 51) Communication is improved because "unarticulated assumptions of administrators and teachers are reduced by defining the outcomes of teacher performance." (p. 52)

French and Hollmann (1975) believe that "one to one MBO simply does not provide the opportunity for maximum coordination of objectives." (p. 15) There are subtleties of interdependent relationship involved in the coordination and there is inadequate attention directed at the interactive processes in which objectives are systematically communicated and adjusted. These researchers state that a superior's role as a coach and his role as a judge may hamper the superior-subordinate relationship. Thus a situation which requires a school principal to supervise a teacher in order to improve instruction may be in conflict with the role of evaluator of performance. The evaluator role requires a value judgement usually based on direct observation with a decision to retain or release hinging on a final recommendation.

Blumberg (1980) asserts that most problems between a supervisor and a teacher occur in the area of interpersonal transactions. If positive results are to be produced during the evaluation process, the interpersonal transaction between teacher and supervisor must be satisfactory to both. This implies that effective communications must be established and maintained if instruction is to be improved. Blumberg (1980, p. 22) states that,

> Supervisors, as well as teachers, refer to the artificiality of the typical supervisory situation, particularly as it applies to new teachers. Much as the teachers are aware that they and their students are "putting on a show" for the supervisor, so he is aware that he has an orchestra seat, front row center. At issue is the level of trust between the supervisor and the teacher, which probably bears a direct relationship to the level of threat the teacher perceives in the situation.

It is the belief of the writer that situations such as the one described occur quite frequently in the evaluation process. The process is viewed as a game in which no one is a real winner. Yet, the writer concurs with

Blumberg in that "most teachers-young or old-are sincerely interested in becoming better and more skilled at their craft." Several reasons are given by Blumberg for teachers rejecting an evaluator/supervisor's help when it is offered.

1) The help offered may be seen as irrelevant or offensive.

2) The rejection may be "symbolic of the continuing battle that is waged in practically every organization between 'those who are getting their hands dirty', and, those whose job is managing, planning, organizing, training, and so forth." (p. 23)

The evaluation process also provides conflict for the teacher. Blumberg further states that, "the teacher's dilemma is that his needs for help on the job conflict with his needs to be seen as competent, for which he must be evaluated favorably." Thus, in performing teacher evaluations, administrators must recognize that certain norms may exist among their faculty which tend to make the evaluation process even more difficult from an interpersonal perspective. One of these norms is, "A professional is a professional is a professional and is, therefore, competent to do the job without seeking outside help. To seek help is to confess incompetence and is, thus, unprofessional." (p. 144) This is not to say that teachers never seek help, but, when they do it may be in ways that are subtle and face saving.

Shrauger and Lund (1975) found that high self-esteem individuals when faced with negative assessments of themselves, were more likely to question the evaluator's competence as a judge of their ability. One may conclude from this finding that in evaluation feedback that it is better to focus on the job rather than on the person. Another consideration is to realize that talking about the past would tend to put people into a defensive role. This writer believes that a supervisor in a helping relationship

should be future oriented, i.e. "Where do we go from here?" Discussing past experiences, an evaluator might center on a person's successes in order to talk about means of improvement.

Martin, Isherwood and Rapagna (1978) found in their study of supervisory effectiveness that a supervisor can effect change in a planned direction, and comments in teacher-supervisory conferences must be goal-directed rather than "ceremonial-congratulations." The study compared Blumberg's direct supervisory style (emphasizing behavior that tells, directs, and criticizes) with the indirect supervisory style, (maximizing a teacher's freedom to participate in the conference by emphasizing verbal behavior that supports, accepts, and questions). The researchers found no significant difference between the effects of either style because style is dependent on the situation. "This appears consistent with the contingency notion of leadership effectiveness espoused by Fielder and Vroom and Yetton but inconsistent with current trends in the survey literature on supervision." (p. 86) A major implication mentioned is that supervisors "need to acquire and explore alternative verbal styles in working with teachers." (p. 86)

Jones (1980) presents a model of communication developed by Boshear and Albrecht which deals specifically with the supervisor-teacher interaction (Appendix 2). It is assumed that there are three possible blocks in the communicative process: the behavior of the supervisor; the behavior of the teacher; or the behavior of both. Jones supports the Blumberg theory that the behavior of the supervisor sets the tone for the interpersonal interaction. An administrator involved in evaluation must be aware that the job requires "a creative mix of interpersonal and task orientations that will be different for each teacher with whom he interacts; that interpersonal factors probably

take precedence over task factors, at least at the initial point of entry into the teacher's system.' (Blumberg, p. 111)

Furthermore, Jones believes that an administrator should consider factors which may block or hinder communication such as nonverbal communication, i.e., proxemic behavior, social distance and physical setting. Research has shown that each person has personal and cultural spacial needs; and, intrusion into that space may cause discomfort. This discomfort could cause avoidance behavior, or negative attitudes which would block communication. The administrator should be consistent during the interaction process in his/her verbal and nonverbal behavior. According to Jones, "the key to nonverbal communication is congruence. Inconsistency between verbal and nonverbal behavior may diminish the influence a person has and cause suspicion on the part of the other person." (p. 434)

The social distance factor may vary during the interaction. It may be greater at the beginning of the interaction; if threatening or stressful information is expected; if an administrator stresses his/her status; or, if there is a hidden agenda or motives on the administrator's part. All of the literature surveyed indicated that if open and effective communication is to take place during evaluation, the administrator and teacher both have to have a clear understanding of the purpose(s) and goal(s) of the evaluation process.

Based on the research of interpersonal interaction as it relates to the administrator-teacher relationship during the evaluation process, the writer concludes that effective communication is possible with planning and hard work. A supervisor needs information about him/herself; i.e., (1) interpersonal

needs; (2) reactions to the behavior of others; (3) ability to recognize and handle conflict situations; (4) level of competence.

Information is also needed about the teacher, including the teacher's behavior in the classroom, and about the student's behavior. This information forms the basis for a satisfactory work relationship if the supervisor is able to use these data. Thus, an administrator must be able to analyze the forces in him/herself (values, supervisory style, tolerance for ambiguity, etc) the forces in the teacher (need for independence, readiness to assume responsibility, etc) and the forces in the situation. In addition to cultivating relationships, it requires sincere concern about the communicative process, and a willingness to attempt different styles of supervision and various interventions in promoting effective communication. According to Bolton (1973), "communications must then be honest as well as skillful, and disagreements must be handled in the open rather than avoided."

In the final analysis, teaching <u>is</u> team work. It requires constant interaction between a teacher and a helpful supervisor. The three phase evaluation model shown in Appendix 1 is an excellent model because it allows for collaborative goal setting and recognizes the personal needs of individuals. It stresses analysis--both of the situation and of the data. In order to make the cyclical process work, however, two-way communication between supervisor/evaluator and teacher must exist in all three phases of the model.

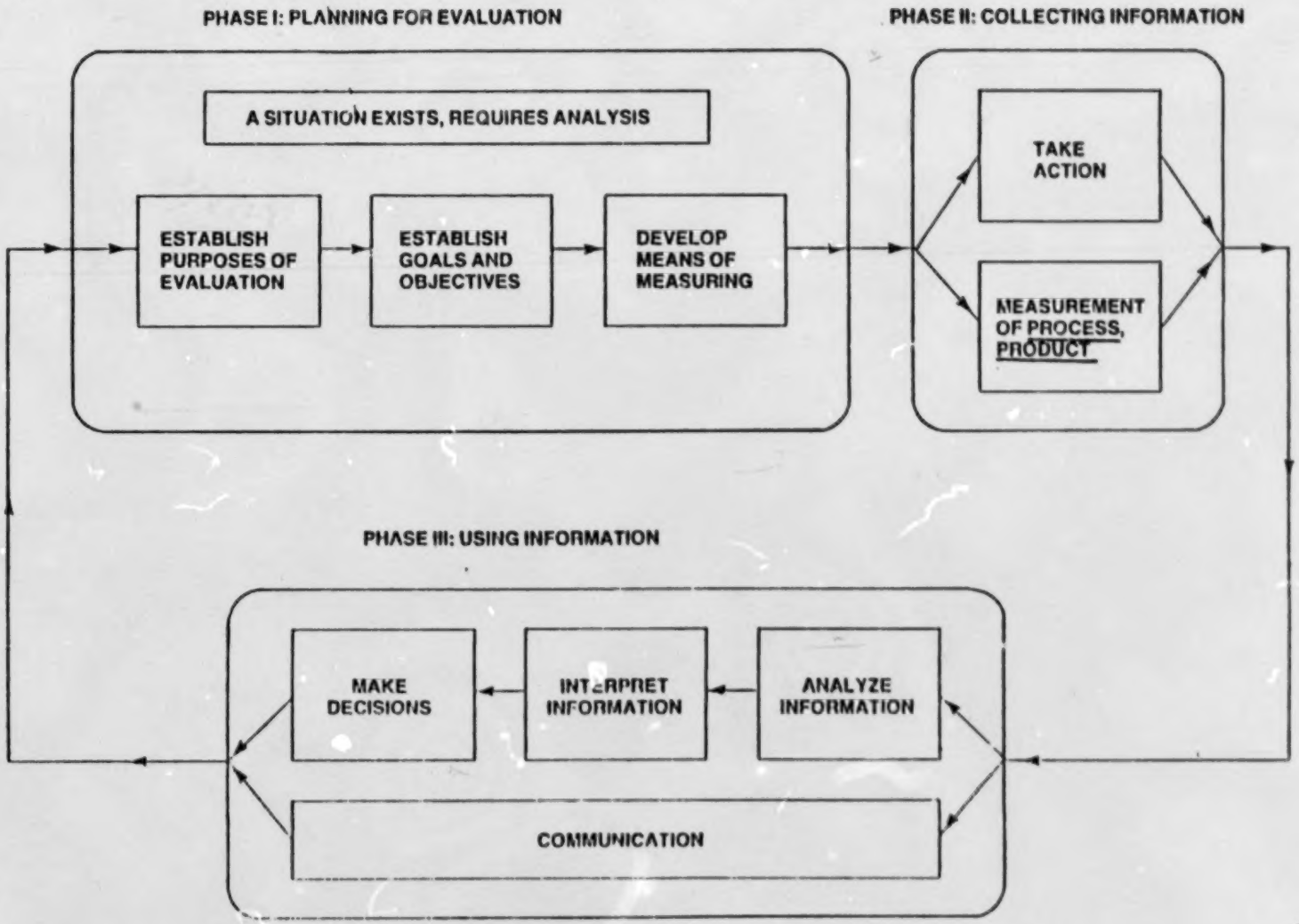
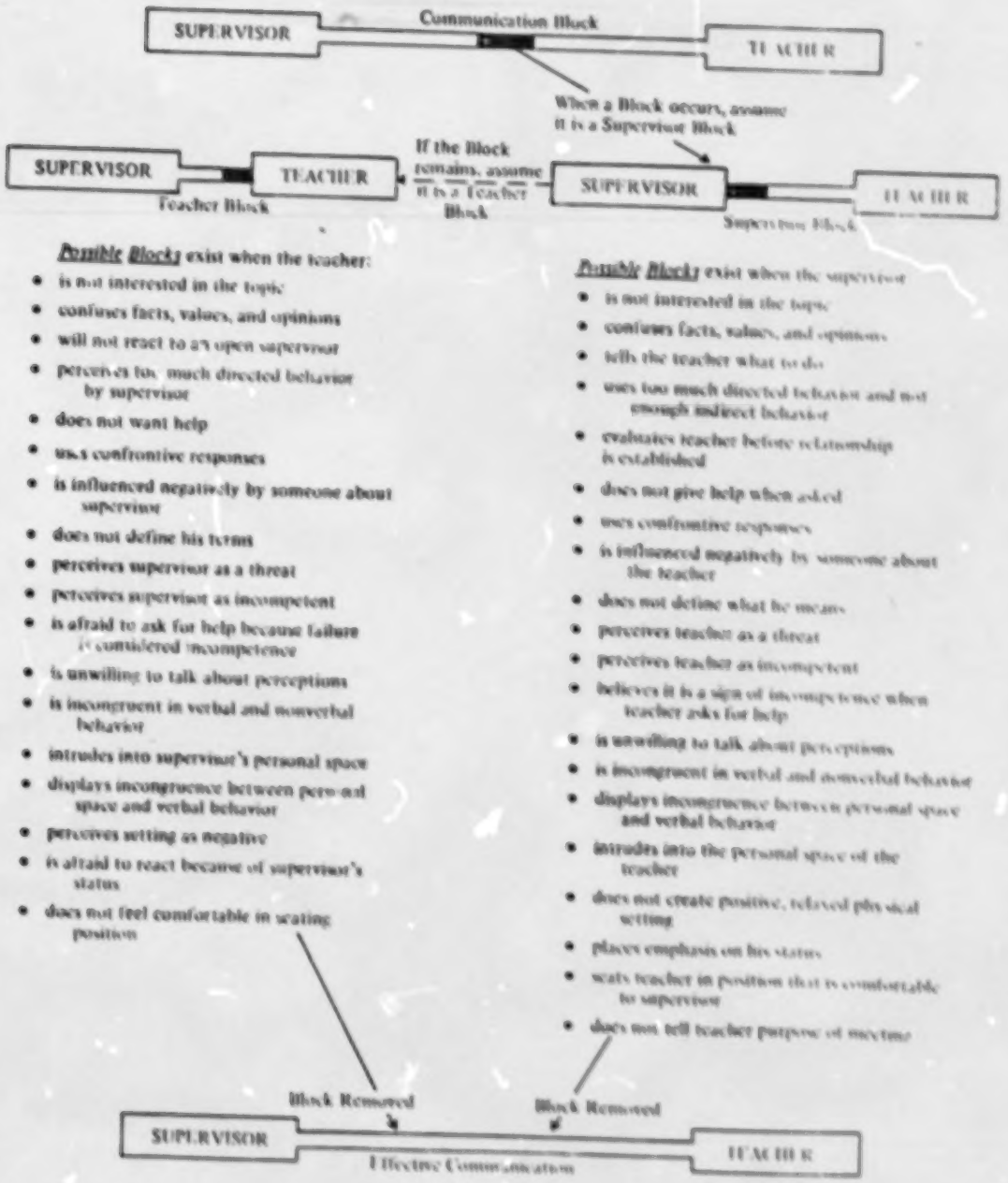


Figure 2-1: A three-phase, cyclical process for evaluation of personnel

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 2

THE SUPERVISOR AND THE TEACHER


SUPERVISOR
Communication Block
TEACHER
When a Block occurs, assume it is a Supervisor Block
SUPERVISOR
TEACHER
Teacher Block
If the Block remains, assume it is a Teacher Block
SUPERVISOR
TEACHER
Supervisor Block
Possible Blocks exist when the teacher:
• is not interested in the topic
• confuses facts, values, and opinions
• will not react to an open supervisor
• perceives too much directed behavior by supervisor
• does not want help
• uses confrontive responses
• is influenced negatively by someone about supervisor
• does not define his terms
• perceives supervisor as a threat
• perceives supervisor as incompetent
• is afraid to ask for help because failure is considered incompetence
• is unwilling to talk about perceptions
• is incongruent in verbal and nonverbal behavior
• intrudes into supervisor's personal space
• displays incongruence between personal space and verbal behavior
• perceives setting as negative
• is afraid to react because of supervisor's status
• does not feel comfortable in seating position
Possible Blocks exist when the supervisor
• is not interested in the topic
• confuses facts, values, and opinions
• tells the teacher what to do
• uses too much directed behavior and not enough indirect behavior
• evaluates teacher before relationship is established
• does not give help when asked
• uses confrontive responses
• is influenced negatively by someone about the teacher
• does not define what he means
• perceives teacher as a threat
• perceives teacher as incompetent
• believes it is a sign of incompetence when teacher asks for help
• is unwilling to talk about perceptions
• is incongruent in verbal and nonverbal behavior
• displays incongruence between personal space and verbal behavior
• intrudes into the personal space of the teacher
• does not create positive, relaxed physical setting
• places emphasis on his status
• seats teacher in position that is comfortable to supervisor
• does not tell teacher purpose of meeting
Block Removed
Block Removed
SUPERVISOR
TEACHER
Effective Communication

Taken from: Jones, Roger E., "The Supervisor and the Teacher. An Effective Model of Communication." The Clearing House, Vol. 59, No. 9: 433-437, (May 1980).

SELECTED REFERENCES

Blumberg, Arthur. Supervisors and Teachers. A Private Cold War. Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1980.

This book on supervision is extremely interesting and quite readable. It focuses primarily on the human side of relationships between supervisors and teachers. The book includes a system for analyzing supervisor-teacher interactions and it should be required reading of those people involved in teacher evaluations.

Bolton, Dale L. Selection and Evaluation of Teachers. Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1973.

This work contains a wealth of information on both processes. The book synthesizes the research which pertains to evaluation and selection, and much of it is drawn from related fields including business. Bolton has presented here an ideal situation to follow in teacher selection or evaluation.

French, Wendell L., and Hollmann, Robert W. "Management by Objectives: The Team Approach." California Management Review, Vol. 17, No. 3: 13-22 (Spring 1975).

This article presents a case and strategy for collaborative management by objectives (CMBO) which is a participative, team-centered approach. It describes some deficiencies in the traditional one-to-one MBO. The organization development planned change effort is suggested as a means of improving performance appraisals.

Jones, Roger E. "The Supervisor and the Teacher. An Effective Model of Communication." The Clearing House, Vol 59, No. 9: 433-437 (May 1980).

A model of communication based on the work of Boshear and Albrecht is suggested as a means of improving the teacher-supervisor interaction. The article also contains information useful to the administrative practitioner on proxemics and effectiveness style of a supervisor.

Knudson, Harry R., Woodworth, Robert T., and Bell, Cecil H. Management: An Experiential Approach. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1979.

This book is designed to give its readers an opportunity to practice in an experiential way many of the managerial concepts which are presented. Exercises for analyzing communication, motivation, decision-making, leadership and conflict are included. It contains discussion on all of these topics and much of the theoretical background is presented in a succinct manner. Excellent reference book.

Martin, Yvonne M., Isherwood, Geoffrey B., and Rapagna, Socrates. "Supervisory Effectiveness." Educational Administration Quarterly, Vol. 14, No. 3: 74-88 (Fall 1978).

This study compares direct and indirect supervisory styles and did not find significant differences. This supports contingency theory which stresses situational factors. The findings supported the practice of goal-oriented supervision. Subjects included 30 student teachers and the unit of analysis was the supervisor-teacher dyad.

Newton, Robert R. "Teacher Evaluation: Focus on Outcomes." Peabody Journal of Education, 58:43-54 (October 1980).

This study offers a concise rationale for the educational technology approach as a means to teacher evaluation. The article proposes that using this system of evaluation would provide advantages in communication and planning of objectives, and in positively motivating teacher behavior. The research article gives the reader a comprehensive "overview" of product evaluation.

Shrauger, J. Sidney, and Lund, Adrian D. "Self-Evaluation and Reactions to Evaluations from Others." Journal of Personality, Vol. 43, No. 1: 94-108 (March 1975).

This study focused primarily on internal locus of evaluation. The findings were consistent with the notion that self-esteem reflects differences in "defensive style," with the high self-esteem person blocking out, distorting, or in some manner invalidating unfavorable self-referent input. Subjects included 48 female introductory psychology students and the procedure included use of structured interviews.